

Smag On Deadly Chemical's Disposal

Site: Spencer, Verona
ID: MO0007452154
Break: 13.3
Other: N/D 0751



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SUPERFUND RECORDS

By JEROME P. CURRY
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Scientists are trying to determine how dispose of 4600 gallons of chemical sludge containing an ingredient so lethal that theoretically one pure drop could kill 80 persons. A storage tank containing some of the material is at Verona, Mo., a little town southwest of Springfield.

This tank was the source of a chemical mistakenly sprayed at three Missouri stables to control dust in 1971. More than 60 horses died and two young sisters became seriously ill as a result. Last summer, scientists at the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Ga., identified the chemical dioxin as the cause. It was the first documented evidence in the United States of such an incident.

The Missouri Department of Health and the company on whose land the storage tank is located are seeking a way to destroy the chemical.

"By our calculations, depending on the weight of the person and the route of administration (oral), we figure a single drop (depending on the drop's volume) would have a toxic effect on 30 to 100

people," one scientist said. "You can kill 80 people with one drop of the pure substance."

The scientist is Patrick E. Phillips, a veterinarian in the state Department of Health. He directed the investigation into the causes of death for the animals at the stables. That inquiry brought together medical detectives from both the state health agency and the federal center.

At first glance, the storage of the chemical wastes that contain the dioxin—in scientific terminology, it is 2,3,7,8-T tetrachlorodibenzopara-dioxin—seems safe enough.

The material is contained in a 20-foot high steel tank bolted to a 6-to-8-inch thick concrete slab.

A half-foot thick layer of insulation surrounds the sides and top of the tank. A cinderblock wall extends about three feet up from the base of the tank to guard against accidents from motor vehicles or machinery.

Warning signs are posted, and traffic is barred from a road that leads past the tank.

"We can protect it as much as humanly possible," Phillips said. "But if a tornado comes along, I don't know. Less than two weeks ago a tornado tore

up Neosho, 50 miles away."

Inside the tank is a tar-like soup of chemical garbage that includes water, ethylene glycol, sodium hydroxide, other substances and, in a ratio of about 330 parts for each million parts of the soup, dioxin. The dioxin accounts for a gallon and a half of the 4600 gallons of chemical sludge inside the 7500-gallon tank. But even that amount is dangerous.

Laboratory tests have found that dioxin caused birth defects in guinea pigs and killed laboratory animals at levels as low as .0006 milligrams for each kilogram of body weight.

For this reason, the use of Herbicide Orange was suspended in 1971 in Vietnam. The defoliant contained 2, 4, 5-T, which is contaminated by dioxin.

"We don't have any statutory powers to force anyone to destroy this material," Phillips said. "The company on whose property the tank is located is exploring ways in which to do so, and they are co-operating with us fully."

That company is Syntex Agribusiness, Inc., which manufactures vitamins for farm animals. The firm is not responsible for the material being on its property; it is attempting to solve the problems of another company to whom it had leased the facility.

The responsible firm is Northeast Pharmaceutical Chemical Co., Inc. It had been manufacturing the germicide hexachlorophene in facilities leased from Syntex Agribusiness.

The dioxin is a byproduct of the manufacture of one of the chemicals used to manufacture hexachlorophene. When the Food and Drug Administration banned the use of hexachlorophene except by prescription, Northeast Pharmaceutical moved, leaving the tank behind. At that time, the presence of the dioxin was unknown.

Northeast, whose headquarters are at Stamford, Conn., has filed for bankruptcy. Godfrey Moll, vice president of operations for Syntex Agribusiness at its Springfield office, said he planned to

Public To Get To See Bingham Drawings

By SALLY BIXBY DEERY
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

The Mercantile Library Association collection of 117 drawings by George Caleb Bingham of Missouri life in the nineteenth century will go on display here from June 3 through June 7 in the ninth-floor exhibition hall of the downtown store of Famous-Barr Co.

The showing will be only the second time that St. Louisans have had an opportunity to view the entire collection.

The first was in 1931, when the former City Art Museum and Kansas City's Nelson-Atkins Gallery collaborated on a show after mounting the drawings, which had been left to the library in scrapbook form in 1856 by a two-term Mayor of St. Louis, John How.

The drawings have become the focal point of a genteel but strongly felt local dispute.

The privately run Mercantile Library is faced with the need to air-condition its facilities at Broadway and Locust Street, to renovate, and to erase an annual deficit of about \$35,000 that is growing by about \$10,000 a year. It

announced last August that it was going to sell the Bingham collection.

The protests were loud—from St. Louisans with a Bingham portrait of a grandmother in the parlor to Hilton Kramer, art critic of The New York Times, who said that "the disposal of Mr. Bingham drawings would be a scandal of major proportions."

In February, Gov. Christopher S. Bond announced the formation of a state-wide committee to try to agree on a purchase price and to ensure that the drawings remain in Missouri.

The announcement of the showing at Famous-Barr does not, apparently, signify progress in that objective. The showing is the brainchild of an employee at Famous-Barr, Ms. Josephine Christian. The exhibition was arranged without the knowledge of the chairman of the exhibitions committee, one of three set up at the meeting in February with Bond.

Receipts from the \$1 admission charge will go to the fund drive, as will

Sunny, Warm

Official forecast for St. Louis and vicinity: Sunny and warm Sunday; low temperature in the morning in the mid 50s, high in the afternoon 69 to 75. Warm Monday through Wednesday, with a chance of showers Friday and again Tuesday; low temperature mostly in the 50s, highs in the 60s.



For finer weather information, see Page 2A.

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